

# Plans for Future Development

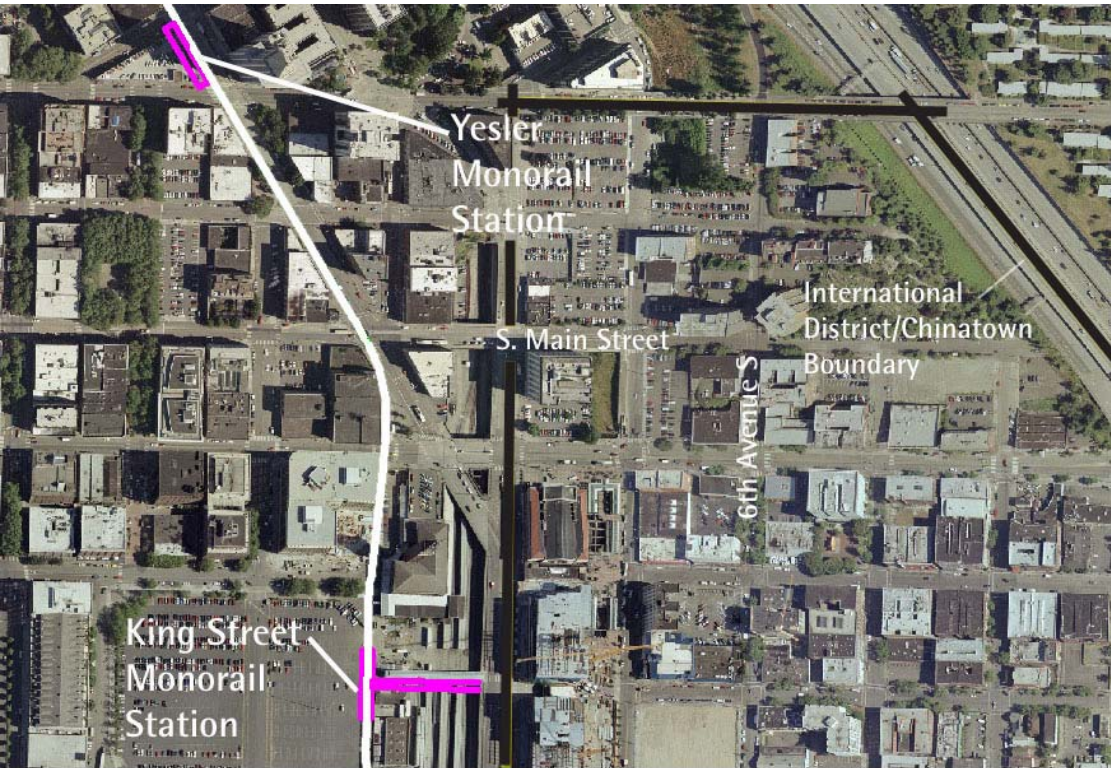
## A City Under Development

This section is intended to provide a brief summary of the various plans and projects in and around the International District and Nihonmachi that will have an impact on the historic character, vitality and accessibility of the neighborhood.

### MONORAIL

Seattle voters established the Seattle Monorail Project in 2002 to build a citywide monorail system. The Seattle Monorail Project is a City Transportation Authority governed by a nine-member board selected through direct election and appointment by the board, the Mayor and the City Council. The project is funded by a vehicle excise tax of approximately .85% of a vehicle's value. The project is currently in its first phase to build the 14-mile Green Line.

The \$1.75 billion, 14-mile Green Line will run from Crown Hill in north Seattle to Morgan Junction in southwest Seattle, connecting Ballard, Seattle, Center, the Downtown retail and business core, Pike Place Market, the Ferry terminal, Pioneer Square, the International District, Seahawks Stadium, Safeco Field and West Seattle. The first segment will open in 2007. Construction of the Green Line is scheduled to begin in 2005 and the first segment of the line is scheduled to begin operation in 2007. The entire Green Line will be in operation in 2009. The planning of a second line is expected to begin sometime in 2003 and all funding for future monorail lines will be submitted to Seattle voters for approval. Additional information on the Seattle Monorail Project, including updates, can be obtained at <http://www.elevated.org/>.



Seattle Monorail Project

## SOUND TRANSIT

Sound Transit is a regional public transit agency delivering a mix of rail, regional bus routes and new transit facilities to the citizens of urban King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. Link Light Rail is one of Sound Transit's transportation projects and its initial 14-mile line is projected to carry at least 42,500 riders a day by 2020. Sound Transit is working with neighborhoods, artists, and cities to ensure that the light rail system and stations are an asset to each community. When the system is completed, Link Light Rail trains will take riders to a number of destinations, providing greater access to jobs and services and increased choices for housing.

The initial 14-mile Central Link Light Rail line will serve downtown Seattle, the industrial area south of downtown and residential and commercial neighborhoods in Beacon Hill, the Rainier Valley, Tukwila and SeaTac. Sound Transit estimates that the line will create a new transportation corridor where 45,000 residents live and 170,000 jobs are located within one-half mile of station entrances. The International District Station will be located at the existing bus terminal at S. Jackson St. and Fifth Ave. S. The bus tunnel will be closed mid-2007 to install new rail and other safety measures. Light rail service is estimated to start at the International District Station in 2009 and will handle approximately 3,300 daily light rail boardings by 2020. Additional information on the Sound Transit Link Light Rail project can be obtained at <http://www.soundtransit.org/linkrail/linkrail.htm>.



Map of the initial 14-mile Central Link Light Rail line.



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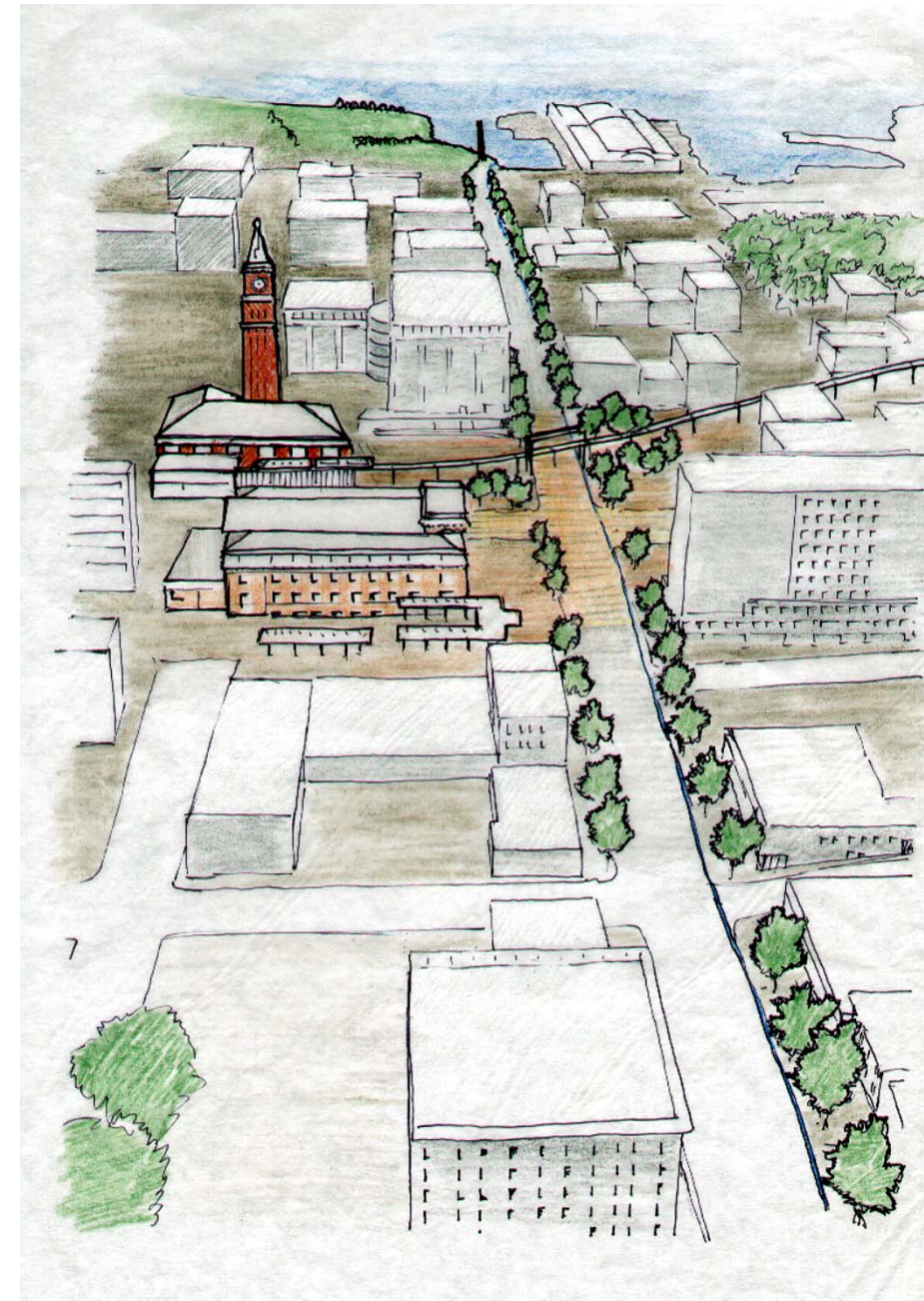
## KING STREET STATION

The University of Washington's Center for Environment, Education and Design Studies (CEEDS), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and City of Seattle CityDesign co-sponsored a week-long design charrette in April 2003, with additional support from OTAK Inc., SoundTransit, and Vulcan Inc. Following an eighteen-year-old tradition at the university, the charrette brought students, faculty and practitioners from various disciplines together with key stakeholders to develop long-term proposals for a transportation community in the area surrounding King Street Station in south Seattle. This area, which serves as a crucial transportation hub for the region and the state, is already undergoing significant transit expansion and construction (Sounder commuter rail, Link Light Rail, transit bus service, Amtrak Cascades, monorail, intercity bus service, Washington State Ferries terminal), and is also experiencing considerable commercial and residential development. By exploring a range of urban design strategies, the charrette co-sponsors hoped to help foster a unified vision for a transit community that serves the needs of the traveling public, the city, and the Chinatown/International District and Pioneer Square neighborhoods.

During a three-hour visioning session, eighty persons worked in six small groups to "play around with" designing the study area. Each small group reflected upon the values underlying its decisions and then wrote several design principles. Through a voting process, the large group agreed on five design principles, one of which gave priority to the pedestrian environment. This particular principle was critical in allowing the design teams to consider that streets are not channels for vehicles but rather are a setting for public life. For this reason, the three design strategies developed in the charrette would all enhance the historic Nihonmachi environment, linking it via Jackson St. to a civic plaza at the station and on to the waterfront. The challenge is to convince the transportation planners that it is an oxymoron to allow vehicular traffic to dominate an area that is to be a multi-modal hub of public transportation. As Council Member Richard Conlin said after viewing the charrette sketches: "These proposals illustrate that transportation is way too important to leave to transportation planners."



A proposed section through Jackson Street.



Jackson as a Green Street connecting to the waterfront.

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## THE BLUE RING

The Blue Ring is Seattle's open space strategy for the Center City. The Center City is composed of ten diverse neighborhoods in and around downtown Seattle. The project grew out of strong community activism and a commitment to creating urban vitality, eclecticness, sustainability and social equality at the core of Seattle and the Puget Sound region. The Blue Ring is being developed by CityDesign, the City of Seattle's office for urban design, with the help of a planning and design team led by Mithun.

Public open space is vital to the quality of life we desire in a growing city. It provides the shared spaces where we can interact with both neighbors and strangers. In a high-density urban setting, public streets, parks and plazas provide the outdoor spaces that are often privatized elsewhere. They make room for festivals, parades and other special events as well as providing places to relax during a normal day. Safe, well-planned and open spaces can become the "outdoor living rooms" of our neighborhoods.

The Blue Ring consists of public open spaces and civic destinations of regional significance linked by selected public rights-of-way. These places are diverse in form and purpose; some already exist, while others are in the planning stages. The connecting public rights-of-way will be improved to serve as both amenable environments for pedestrians and cyclists and functional streets for vehicles. Large portions of the Blue Ring will help bridge the physical gaps between neighborhoods resulting from I-5 and the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Shoreline improvements to two parts of the Blue Ring, the Waterfront and South Lake Union Park, will provide people with direct access to water. The most challenging improvements will be physical changes to the waterfront and a lid over I-5. The Blue Ring may be defined in a number of different ways. It may include a series of features that celebrate water in playful and artful ways. It may include a wayfinding system to provide joggers and cyclists a recreational path encircling Center City. Or it may include special lighting and wide promenades to encourage strolling, vendors and gardens along its path. More than a line on the map, the Blue Ring framework will be developed to provide specific design directions to improve physical design of Seattle's urban center.

This 100-year vision is the first part of a strategy for the public spaces for Center City Seattle. This strategy has been drafted to provide a mechanism for coordinating a large number of plans, private developments and capital improvement projects in the Center City, and to shape a coherent system of places into a healthy public realm. The result of years of work by neighborhood advocates, City of Seattle staff, elected officials, and others, the "Blue Ring" Open Space Strategy shapes both a common vision for the long term and an implementation plan for a public realm that is comfortable, beautiful and teeming with activity. The Blue Ring now consists of two draft documents released on June 25, 2002: *The 100-Year Vision* and *The Next Decade*, a 10-year implementation strategy.



Map of the Blue Ring.



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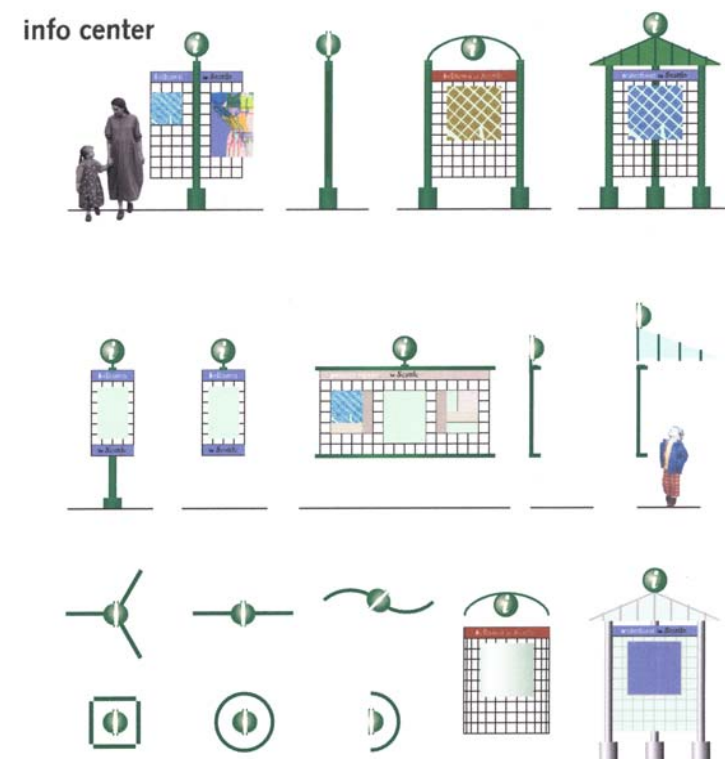
## WAYFINDING

The Center City Wayfinding Project will provide signage, maps and a website that will enhance everyone's ability to move about the city, locate destinations and obtain information. In the late 1990s, the City of Seattle was awarded a three-part Federal STP grant to design and implement a downtown wayfinding system. In 1998–1999, the City of Seattle's Transportation Department completed a pilot project that resulted in 28 wayfinding kiosks along Pike and Pine Streets, First Ave. and other locations. CityDesign, along with consultants Sea Reach, Ltd., are currently developing a manual of design standards and location plan for a comprehensive wayfinding system in the Center City area. The goals of the Center City Wayfinding Project are to achieve the following:

- A comprehensive Center City wayfinding system that also complements neighborhood character.
- A seamless wayfinding system that will enable people to easily find key destinations, park their cars and feel confident with walking and using transit in the Center City.
- A flexible yet consistent wayfinding system for all users.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting Robert Scully at 206.233.3854 or by visiting the Center City Wayfinding Project website:

[http://www.cityofseattle.net/dclu/CityDesign/DesignLeadership/Conn\\_n\\_Places/CenterCityWayfinding.htm](http://www.cityofseattle.net/dclu/CityDesign/DesignLeadership/Conn_n_Places/CenterCityWayfinding.htm)



Possible wayfinding kiosk options.

## CENTRAL WATERFRONT PLAN

The Central Waterfront Plan recognizes the Seattle waterfront as a valuable regional resource with enormous potential for economic and social benefits. The waterfront has long been separated from Seattle's urban fabric by the Alaskan Way viaduct; the current need to replace or rebuild the viaduct is a catalyst for central waterfront planning by the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (DCLU). The purpose of the Central Waterfront Planning effort is to define a community vision for the future of the area. The Plan is intended to reconnect Seattle to its "front porch" and to create a vital, active waterfront for local and regional residents, workers, tourists and visitors. The planning area encompasses the corridor between the Elliott Bay shoreline and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., extending from Myrtle Edwards Park on the north to Atlantic Ave. on the south. The planning area specifically encompasses Piers 48 to 66 and Terminal 46. The Plan will be developed in stages with opportunities for public involvement for each stage. Additional information on the Central Waterfront Plan may be obtained through the following DCLU websites:

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/dclu/CentralWaterfront/default.asp>

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/dclu/CentralWaterfront/Overview.asp#>



Seattle's central waterfront.

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## CHINATOWN, JAPANTOWN, LITTLE SAIGON INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT URBAN DESIGN PLAN

Inter\*Im, along with consultants Nakano Associates and a Community Advisory Board, have been developing an urban design plan for the International District over the last year—*The Chinatown, Japantown, Little Saigon International District Urban Design Plan*. The plan addresses such urban design elements as streetscapes, intersections and open space, with specific attention to lighting, trees, street furniture, public art, signage and street surface. Future plans include developing guidelines for new construction in the community.

- Community input has helped create principles for physical improvements to help create a healthy, livable neighborhood:
- Public rights-of-way are public resources and potential sources of open space that provide opportunities to beatify the community and facilitate economic development.
  - Sidewalks and paths should facilitate pedestrian movement both within the community and to adjacent neighborhoods. Improvements must enhance the pedestrian environment, including exposing commercial activity to and on the street/sidewalk.
  - Streetscapes and open spaces should facilitate community-building by incorporating community events and process in their planning, construction, and use.

The urban design plan cites the Panama Hotel, N.P. Hotel, Nippon Kan Theater, Kobe Terrace Park and Danny Woo Community Garden as prominent sites in the Japantown/Nihonmachi area. S. Main St., Maynard Ave., Jackson St. and Sixth Ave. are named as important streets for Japantown. For example, Main St. and Maynard Ave. have been designated Green Streets by the city. In addition, Maynard Ave. links two important open spaces—Danny Woo Community Garden and Hing Hay Park. Several recommendations detail how Nihonmachi could be culturally distinctive through public art, street trees, and special street paving.

## SOUTH DOWNTOWN VISION

Early in 2002, the Pioneer Square Community Development Organization met with several developers including Greg Smith of Martin Smith Development, William Justen of Samis, representatives from Nitzche-Stagen and Vulcan, to discuss how Pioneer Square could be enhanced with more open spaces and housing. These Pioneer Square developers reviewed Pioneer Square itself; the three-block area, which is currently parking lots, at the northwest corner of the International District (between Fourth and Sixth Avenues north of Jackson St.); the north parking lot of the football stadium; and the Port property southwest of Pioneer Square. They recommended that the housing capacity of the South Downtown area could be increased by more than 10,000 units and that additional open space including a major new park and several playfields could be developed. The plan calls for an increased height limit (from 120 feet to 240 feet) in the northwest corner of the International District, which would increase density. However, some community members are concerned with the shadow and view impacts of these zoning changes. Information about the plan is available at <http://www.seattlevision.org>.

## FUTURE PROJECTS

### Main Street Family Housing

Inter\*Im is planning a 50-unit, low-income family housing project at the southeast corner of Main St. and Maynard Ave., which will be designed by Pyatok Associates. The site has been sitting as a vacant lot for several decades and has contributed to public safety problems. Current plans are to have an internal courtyard for residents, a unique amenity in a dense neighborhood, and offices and parking on the ground floor.



Model of Main Street Family Housing Project. Photo courtesy of Inter\*Im.



Recent improvements made in Danny Woo International District Community Garden.

### Danny Woo Community Garden Improvements

Inter\*Im created a master plan for the garden two years ago, which identified areas in need of improvement: common areas near the tool shed, the western edge, and the southern edge. To this end, a design/build class from the University of Washington Architecture department recently completed work on the south edge.

### Kobe Terrace Park Improvements

The Department of Parks and Recreation has been removing English ivy and replacing it with perennials; the goal is to eventually remove all English ivy from the park. The community plans to push the State to mitigate some noise impacts of I-5 in the park.



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## Public Art

The Community Action Partnership and other neighborhood organizations are planning a public art project for the Main Street retaining wall located just below Danny Woo Community Garden. They have discussed creating a mural on the wall, but have not decided on a specific medium.



Existing retaining wall below Danny Woo Community Garden.

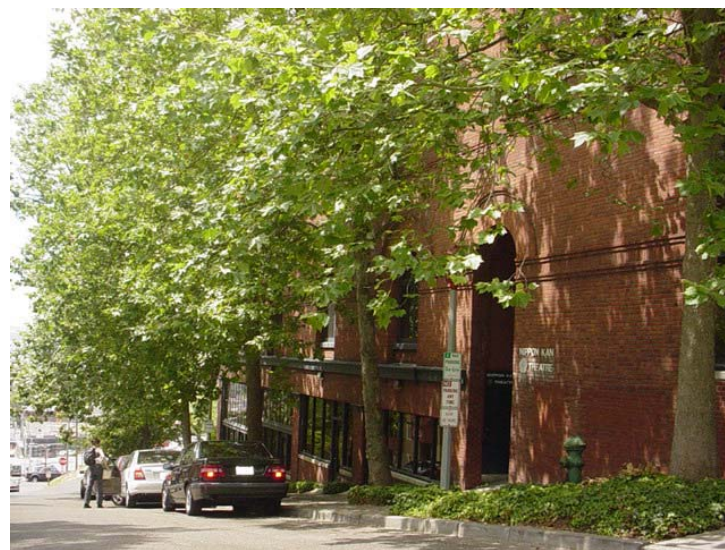
## KEY PROPERTIES

### Nippon Kan Theater

This structure has been for sale since the death of its late owner in 2002. Because Nippon Kan Theater is a landmark for the Japanese American community, it is important for the community to preserve this site and retain access to this cultural facility.



West façade of Nippon Kan Theatre.



South façade of Nippon Kan Theatre.

### Sixth Ave. and Yesler Way

The City of Seattle owns this parcel that affords views over the city. The City planned to surplus the property in 2001, but has not been able to sell the land.

### Main St. and Maynard Ave.

The Dermody Group LLC recently purchased a parking lot at this intersection, adjacent to the Panama Hotel. There is discussion of a mid-rise building being constructed on the site.

### Parking Lot behind Ticino

Two potential buyers have looked at purchasing this property, but the property remains for sale.

### Moriguchi Family Developments

The Moriguchi family owns two key parcels in the Japantown area. One is a half-block area on the east side of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Main and Jackson Streets. The vision for this site is to begin development of a mid-rise hotel and apartment complex with retail at street level within the next five years. The other property is a quarter-block area at the northwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Main Street. There are no current plans for development of this property.

### Jackson Building

This building, where the Higo business currently resides, may soon be under new ownership due to the anticipated retirement of its present owner.

### Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Washington

The local Japanese American community is interested in creating a cultural center. As the Nisei generation is getting older, people were beginning to be concerned that this vision would not be realized, which renewed interest in the project. In addition, the aging population affords opportunities to raise money for the project. As the Japanese American population becomes increasingly scattered, this center would create a cultural focal point. The facility's program will be finalized in July. The location for the cultural center has not been decided and organizers of the project are considering both renovation of an existing building, such as the Nippon Kan Theater, and building a new structure. In addition, they are exploring the possibility of building the center as part of a larger development project. Discussion at the charrette raised the question of how this property might contribute to the preservation of Japantown. For more information see <http://hostingprod.com/@jccw.org/home.html>.